Apostle Paul: A Model for Effective Teaching - II Timothy 3

I Introduction

READ II Timothy 3

Buzzword - "Effective Teaching".

If I could give a title to this "charge" or devotional, I would entitle it the "Apostle Paul: A Model for Effective Teaching," borrowing from Paul's charge to Timothy.

What is effective teaching? Perhaps it can be asked, what are the **components of effective teaching**?

Of course, one aspect is the knowledge transfer from the teacher to the student. Both Christian educators and non-Christian educators would likely agree on this. But isn't it much more than that? When we download a file from the Internet to our computer, it transfers information from one computer to another. Sadly, some people would compare this to effective teaching! There is a successful transfer of information from one source to another, from the teacher to the student.

I would dare say that this is often the goal of many educators in our country. This is reflected in the ultimate objective of high achievement test scores. If this is achieved at the end of the school year, then in the minds of some, effective teaching has taken place. But is this the only goal for Christian education? Surely, Bible-based education is much more than a demonstration by the student that he or she has learned the material and scores well on a standardized exam!

I believe that **principles of effective teaching can be found** in II Timothy 3. The Apostle Paul is a model teacher, and Timothy is his student. Thus, the Christian school teacher can learn much from the apostle.

II Paul's Exemplary Life

The first characteristic or principle of Paul's teaching that made him such an effective teacher was his godly and holy life. This exemplary life served as a model for his student, Timothy. Paul was very aware of this and was not afraid to remind Timothy of "his way of life".

Read verse 10: "know all about my teaching and my way of life". Verse 14, "because you know those from whom you learned it".

The Apostle Paul's life was an open book to Timothy. Timothy recognized that Paul lived in accordance with his teachings. He understood that Paul's teachings reflected his testimony in Christ.

We see this often used by Paul in persuading his readers to live holy and godly lives.

In 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, Paul sends his student Timothy, whose specific task was to remind the Corinthian Church of Paul's way of life, which always agreed with what he taught!

READ 1 Corinthians 4:16-17

"I urge you to imitate me" is a bold statement. When your class comes into your room at the beginning of the school year, can you tell them, "**Class, I urge you this year to be imitators of me?**"

In another part of 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul states, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." Let me ask you: Are you the example you aspire to be for the young people God has entrusted to your care in your classroom?

Paul's exemplary life as a godly Christian man enabled him to say this with a clear conscience and made him an effective teacher.

In I Timothy 3, he speaks of his "way of life"; as part of this, Paul writes of "his faith and patience". These qualities could not help but be noticed by Timothy and all those to whom he taught the Word of God.

Are these qualities yours in the classroom? Do your students recognize these things in you?

So, the first prerequisite for being an effective teacher is growing and developing one's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and becoming more like our Savior! This is the process of sanctification, which all believers in Christ must strive for.

I would summarize this by saying that a good Christian curriculum or even solid Bible lessons are NOT enough. For our teaching to be effective, our lives must reflect God's grace, demonstrated in our personal holiness.

Perhaps not now, but perhaps later, our students will say of you, **"I know their way of life,"** and who knows, God may use this to save their souls!

III Paul's Loving Heart

The second characteristic, or principle, of Paul's teaching that made him so effective was his clearly loving heart.

This can be divided into three aspects: his evident love for God, his affection for his students, and his passion for the subject matter he taught. Let's briefly consider all three.

a) Paul's love for God was evident to Timothy. In verse 10, he mentions that Timothy was well aware of Paul's "love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings."

   In verse 11, Paul mentions Iconium and Lystra, the locations Timothy originally came from, as indicated in Acts 16. Timothy may have personally witnessed Paul's love for God while enduring these challenges and persecutions.

This love of the Lord Jesus Christ, even to the point of death in some cases, made Paul an even more effective teacher.

Do you see his love for the Lord Jesus Christ clearly evident in his teaching? Our love for Christ must also be evident in our teaching!

b) Besides this great love for God, the Apostle Paul profoundly loves those he taught. We can use Timothy as an example. Paul begins his letter by stating in chapter 1, verse 2 NIV, "To Timothy, my dear son." The KJV reads, "To Timothy, my **dearly beloved** son." There are numerous instances in the New Testament where Paul's deep affection for Timothy is evident. This affection would have significantly aided in making Paul's teaching even more effective in Timothy's life.

c) Besides the evident love for God and for those whom the Apostle Paul taught, this passage of Scripture, along with all of Paul's letters, clearly shows that he had a profound love for the subject he taught.

Paul never got bored with what he taught!

I remember this being a significant problem during my brief teaching career. Several years ago, I taught at a public high school for four years. The same curriculum, challenging students, and inability to communicate Scriptural truth made me feel bored and frustrated.

I realized that I truly didn't enjoy what I was doing; consequently, I left teaching! I was simply ineffective as a teacher! What was really frightening was that, as far as I could tell, many other teachers in the school seemed extremely bored and uninterested in what they were teaching. Yet, they had been there for years and would never consider leaving their tenured positions.

This is extremely important to remember! The result of bored teachers is bored students!

One common question asked during interviews for teaching positions at our school is: What type of reading do you enjoy, and what are some of the most recent books you've read? This question reveals a lot about the individual, particularly their interests. For instance, if the candidate is a history teacher, do they spend their leisure time reading any history-related books? Similarly, if they are a literature teacher, do they enjoy exploring works by various authors?

I want to encourage each of you to strive even harder to cultivate a love for the subjects you teach. I know from experience that your enthusiasm in the classroom and your passion for your material are tremendous sources of encouragement for our students, inspiring them to love what they are learning!

Although I've never taught in a Christian school, I'm sure the struggle to resist boredom exists there as well. However, the wonderful aspect of Christian education is the opportunity to introduce scriptural truth, no matter the subject. We must never grow bored with the Word of God!

I've mentioned the importance of the Christian teacher's example of holiness, love for the Lord, the students, and the subject matter. Lastly, the role of the Word of God is, without a doubt, the most important component of effective teaching.

IV. The Word of God

In II Timothy 3, the Apostle Paul reminds his student Timothy of the role Scripture has played in his life since his childhood.

READ verses 14-17

The **SCRIPTURES! The Word of GOD! The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ**.

What a great privilege you have to incorporate Scripture into your lesson plans!

God's truth, consistently presented as the foundation for all knowledge, provides the student with a reality-based worldview.

Christian education is the only education grounded in reality. When God's truth is not the starting point, education becomes centered around man, leading to confusion.

The late Professor John Murray, formerly from Westminster Seminary, has an interesting article on Christian Education. (It was written in 1973, near the end of his life).

In this article, he addresses the problem of **fragmentation and integration**.

By this, he means that many young people in our society have a fragmented or broken worldview. They hear one philosophy at home, another in school, and perhaps something different in the church.

In contrast to fragmentation, integration should be the goal of education. The article discusses a three-pronged approach to present an integrated worldview: the home, the church, and the school. Consistently applying the truth of Scripture to the heart of the young person. **How blessed the young person is to have this consistency even from infancy!**

It seems likely that this was Timothy's good fortune. His mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, provided his early training in the things of the Lord (II Timothy chapter 1). They were no doubt part of a Christ-centered church family.

My point is that although we have no control over our students' home or church lives, the Word of God must be central to all subject matter.

This is the greatest challenge that the Christian educator faces.

So, your challenge for this year is to prayerfully strive to incorporate God's truth into everything you teach.

Summary

Effective teaching components:

1) Strive to be godly examples like Paul, who said, "Know all about my teaching, my way of life."

2) Love for the Lord, your students, and your subject matter.

3) Subject matter, regardless of what it might be, should be based on the principles of Scripture.

May the Lord abundantly bless you and your students this year!